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THE MUSICAL TIMES, And Singing Class Circular.

JUNE 1st, 1849.

HISTORIC SKETCH OF CHURCH MUSIC,

Condensed from Alexandre Choron's "Principes de Composition."

(Continued from page 152.)

We have now noticed in what manner the *mélange* of the musical ideas of barbarous nations with the remains of Grecian music gave birth to the modern system, and shall next proceed to observe the gradual development of this system. This development may be traced to three principal periods: first, the creation of the gamut or scale, and of modern notation; secondly, the invention of modern rhythm; and thirdly, the determining of the value of notes, and of the rules of counterpoint. To these same periods may be traced the origin and progress of composition: we shall therefore discuss them.

Invention of the Gamut and Origin of Counterpoint.

The invention of the gamut presupposes a certain degree of progress in the musical system, in the same manner that the alphabet conveys the preliminary idea of the existence of a language. I make this remark that the scale of music may not be confounded with the *system*, which otherwise might easily be the case. It was in the year 1022, that the musical scale first took the form which it now retains. This reformation was chiefly owing to Guido, a Benedictine monk of the monastery of Pomposa, born about 990, at Arezzo, a little town of Tuscany. From the time of Gregory the Great to the time of Guido many attempts were made to improve musical notation, which had hitherto consisted only of letters placed over the syllables, to indicate the sounds. That which most naturally occurred was, to place the letters at different degrees of height from each other, analogous to the elevation or depression of the voice, and to mark these degrees in a more accurate manner by means of parallel lines. Guido likewise added to the ancient system a bass note answering to *sol*, on the first line of the clef Fa: he designated this note by the *Gamma* of the Greeks, (Γ) and it is from this sign that the series of sounds in the system take their name of *gamut*. To these inventions he added another; that of counting by hexachords instead of tetrachords, and of designating by the syllables, *ut, re, mi, fa, sol, la*, the *major* hexachord, upon whatever degree of the system it is placed: this was the foundation of his method of solmisation, which, however, it would be tedious to explain here. The invention of counterpoint is likewise attributed to him, though without any foundation.

It is true he was one of the first who wrote on the subject, but he was not the inventor: for though this art made little progress, still it was known before Guido's time, and the following was its real origin.

We just now observed, that the organ was introduced into France in the year 757, and soon became universal in the churches of the west. It was directly used as an accompaniment to the voice. This accompaniment was at first entirely in unison; but the facility with which several sounds could be distinguished at once, occasioned the remark, that, among the various union of sounds, many were agreeable to the ear. The minor third was among the first remarked for its pleasing harmony, and was therefore generally used, though only at the close of an air, as we shall perceive from the following example:—

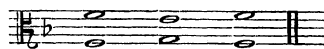


and this method was called *organizing*. There were likewise many other methods; for instance, holding on the sound of the organ on some note below the chant or singing part, or playing the air a fourth below or a fifth above, and frequently both together, which last was called *double organization*. Soon after, this method was adopted in singing without the organ; and from thence the terms *descant*, meaning double chant, *triple, quadruple, medius, motet, quintet, quartet*, &c., all of which preceded the term *counterpoint*. An uninterrupted series of authors anterior to Guido, as Notker, Remi of Auxerre, Hucbald, and Odon de Cluny, testify the origin and progress of this art, and historically demonstrate its being a modern invention, totally unknown to the ancients. Their writings, as well as those of Guido, and of J. Coton, (his commentator) are to be found in the valuable collection which the prince abbé Gerbert published under the title of "*Scriptores Ecclesiastici de Musica Sacra postissimum*, &c."

The Invention of Modern Rhythm.

As the plain-chant consisted of notes of equal value, and as, up to the period of which we have been speaking, it was the only music studied by the learned, rhythm was never mentioned, for being almost entirely null, it could not be considered an object of speculation. From that time, either from the circumstance of profane music, which contained a more distinct rhythm, having risen to a greater degree of importance, or from musicians having begun to feel the necessity of stricter time when the organ and voice moved together, it is certain that this branch of the art began more fully to be considered. The first author who wrote on the subject was *Franco*, called by some, *Franco of Cologne*, and by others, *Franco of Paris*. This author,

kinds of consonances—the perfect, the imperfect, and middling. The first kind consists of those of which the sounds can hardly be separately distinguished, as in the octave and unison; the second, where the sounds are perfectly distinct, as in the major and minor third; the middling consonance includes the fifth and fourth. Dissonances are of two kinds, perfect and imperfect: the perfect are semitone, the tritone, and the major or minor third with the fifth; the imperfect are the major and minor third. He speaks afterwards of the use of consonances, and points out some rules, which, however, are difficult to understand, on account of the imperfection of the examples. An obvious progress is nevertheless visible in these examples, in which we particularly remark the use of the major or minor sixth between two octaves: this is the first example of the kind to be found in the records of the art.



(To be continued.)

A Constant Subscriber.—*There are so many Collections of Psalm Tunes and Chants, and those at such moderate prices, that it is thought unnecessary to occupy the pages of The Musical Times, whilst so many other excellent compositions claim our space.*

W. S. A.—*The Chromatic System of Sol-faing proposed by Mr. Jackson, (vide Page 140, Vol. 3, ante.) would probably be your best assistance in the difficult music of Spohr, &c., or where much modulation occurs.*

A. J. Z. shall have a private answer to his letter, if he will send his address. Music, like other good things, may be made the occasion of evil, if injudiciously pursued. We should recommend him to stick to his business, and give up music entirely, until he can enjoy it with discretion.

P. J.—*Stamped copies of The Musical Times can only be obtained within six days of publication.*

QUEEN'S COLLEGE INSTITUTION FOR LADIES, TUFFNELL PARK, CAMDEN TOWN.—A performance took place at this establishment on the 8th of May, calculated to shew what may be done in Ladies' Schools for the furtherance of the best interests of music, both as a recreation and an art. The performance consisted of Mendelssohn's "Hymn of Praise," and a selection, including, among other things, his anthem for treble voices, "Laudate pueri," the unaccompanied trio, "Lift thine eyes," and Handel's "Hallelujah." The ladies of the Institution are entirely responsible for all the parts adapted to ladies' voices, the tenor and bass parts being filled by gentlemen of Mr. Hullah's upper schools. The performance was under the direction of Mr. Monk, who, as the representative of Mr. Hullah, has attended the institution professionally from its commencement. Mr. George Osborne accompanied on the pianoforte. The number of voices engaged was about eighty, of which sixty were the young ladies of the College.